

Our House, in the Middle of Our House

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Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Alternate Universe - Soulmates, Multi, the song that's stuck in your soulmate's head is also stuck in yours

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Beverly Marsh & Ben Hanscom, Bill Denbrough & Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-10-22

Updated: 2017-10-22

Packaged: 2020-01-29 13:19:42

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,460

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Whatever song your soulmate has stuck in their head is resultedly stuck in yours. Eddie, long suffering through mattress commercial jingles and old rock hits, imagines he would kill his soulmate if he had the chance. Or, he would, if he didn't think revenge was a better answer.

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Author's Note:

okay so i have pretty severe adhd like richie, and i keep seeing soulmate aus where the soulmate like... comprehensively knows the entire song stuck in their head and doesn't compulsively rerun one line over and over and over and OVER until everyone wants to fucking die which is So Unrealistic, for literally anyone but especially for an adhd brain. so through my habit of writing my own take on common tropes, i present you with this dumpster fire.

It started when Eddie was young, and never fucking stopped.

Really, he didn't know who to feel worse for. Himself, who was dragged out of sleep, jerked out of focus during tests, and forced into a daze during dinner, time and time again, to have a jaunty rendition of *push it* by salt n pepa replayed in his head, where the only fucking verse was '*p-push it, p-push it real good* ,' over and over without pause or reprieve. Or his soulmate, who either had the *lalalalala* interlude from *crocodile rock* stuck in their head for seven hours or listened to the same song on repeat for a full week.

Every single day since he was almost ten years old, he planned to kill his soulmate on sight if he ever met them. It drove him up the wall, he struggled with his grades, and everyone that knew him knew his predicament. Sometimes during class, when Eddie would tap the same three note beat onto his desk with his pencil for the entire class period, Stan would give him a sympathetic look. Bill would usually get the beat or the song stuck in his own head, and Stan would threaten to kill him if he didn't stop (that was how they discovered they were soulmates, actually. In sixth grade, when Eddie hummed the local mattress commercial jingle under his breath for three hours and it caught onto Bill. It only took thirty minutes for Stan to accidentally hum the tune in time with Bill's thoughts, then slam his hands on the lunch table and say through his teeth '*oh my god, you got that stupid jingle in my soulmate's head* ,' at Eddie. Bill flushed to his ears and croaked an apology.)

Richie, on the other hand, was completely unapologetic. He would laugh when Eddie complained about it, or would go so far as start to sing the song out loud to make it as stuck in Eddie's head as his soulmate's. The little bastard. Sometimes he couldn't believe he was Eddie's best friend. Richie hadn't met his soulmate, claimed he didn't care if he met them or not because '*you're just so damn cute eds, who needs a soulmate when i have you ?*' He would roll his eyes and call him an idiot, but it didn't bother him. Eddie wanted to meet his soulmate, for reasons that fluctuated. To find someone that genuinely loved and cared for him more than to find the tormentor of his entire fucking livelihood.

When they met the three others that would soon become members of a fully fledged Losers Club, Eddie wondered if one of them was his soulmate. That was disproven within the week. Mike didn't have a soulmate, they either died when they were young or never existed in the first place. He said it didn't bother him, that he never had any romantic inclinations in the first place and was happy with only friends and family. Ben and Beverly were soulmates, found out when Beverly listened to a song on Ben's walkman. All three were quickly clued in on Eddie's problem.

"How long has that been in your head?" Ben asked one afternoon, when Eddie hummed the first two lines of *paradise city* a couple times during a study session.

"Since this morning," he answered, and scribbled out a wrong answer on his homework. "They switched 'grass' and 'girls' an hour ago."

"Where the girls are green and the grass is pretty?"

"Unfortunately."

"Your soulmate is an insane person." Eddie laughed, and watched Ben highlight something in his textbook and write it down.

"You have no idea."

He answered a call that night from Richie, who wanted to know if he figured out the last question of their biology homework. Eddie leaned back in his desk chair (then straightened, remembering his mother's

lectures about posture,) and flipped to the last question in their bio packet. Neither he nor Ben could find the answer to it in their textbooks, and a few hours ago he gave up and decided he'd just let his teacher mark it off.

"No. You'll have to ask Stan for the answer." He tapped *the girl can't help it* onto his desktop with his fingers. Mike was singing it in the locker room after gym last week, and let him borrow the record when he displayed interest in it. He planned on buying the cassette.

"No I got it," Richie said. There was the sound of his backpack being unzipped, and rustling papers. "It was kinda hard, so like a real gentleman and wot-not I rang ya so ya didn't miss it, guvna." Eddie sighed. He wasn't mad about a possible underestimation of his intelligence, although a little chagrined that Richie, who didn't even listen during class and took none of it seriously when he did, knew that if he struggled then Eddie definitely did. Richie beat boxed a butchered version of *the girl can't help it* while he flipped through his own packet.

"Mike get you hooked, too?" Eddie asked. Richie stopped.

"Huh? Oh, yeah, sure." He continued the sad beat boxing, but a lot quieter. He read out his answer in his horrible Irish cop voice, and Eddie couldn't help but smile while he copied even though he told Richie it was absolutely awful.

At about eleven that night the song fizzled into a hum in the back of Eddie's mind, and he managed to fall asleep to the sound of crickets outside his bedroom.

Then, not even five hours later, Eddie was awoken by another tune blared loud in his head.

*Our house, in the middle of
our house, in the middle of
our house, in the middle of
our house, in the middle of*

Eddie pulled his pillow over his head and screamed into it.

"I'm going to fist fight them. With my fists. I'm really going to fight them," Eddie told the losers, sans Richie who had morning detention, on their way to school. Dark bruises marred the undersides of his eyes from lack of sleep. That one tune stayed stuck in his head until seven before it dropped off. Of course, that was when Eddie's alarm clock for school rung.

"M-Muh-Maybe they're as t-tired as you are," Bill suggested. "It h-has to be f-fruh-frustrating for th-them, too."

"Get revenge," Stan countered, and Bill sighed and shook his head. "Listen to the most annoying song you can think of, 24 hours a day for the next week."

"Agreed," Bev said, and the two high fived.

"Or you can, y'know, not do that. You could think of a love song, something romantic, instead of striking out," Mike said.

"I agree w-wuh-with that one," Bill said pointedly. Ben nodded as well. Eddie thought on it.

"I'm gonna get revenge." The response was mixed, but by the time they walked up the front steps of their school building everyone spitballed at least one idea for a horrible song. It didn't matter, because Eddie already had his heart set on one the moment he decided to go for revenge.

When school let out, Eddie went to the record store and searched for the worst song he could think of, instead of going straight home like he promised his mother. *What's new pussycat*. Mrs. Kaspbrak liked to listen to it on their record player every once in awhile, and he hated it. So, naturally, he bought it and started to play it on his walkman before he even got out of the store.

He listened to it all night, put new batteries into his walkman before he went to school and listened to it between every class. Bev laughed hysterically when she learned what Eddie chose to listen to, and even Bill and Mike couldn't hold back a few bemused giggles. The song itself put him into a bad mood, but the fact that his soulmate had to listen to it over and over again too made him grin cruelly every time

he thought about it. He walked to lunch with Richie, who looked a little mad. When he asked what stick lodged itself up Richie's ass, Richie shrugged him off.

"I dunno, ask your mom," he said.

"That doesn't make any sense," Eddie said, and Richie pushed up his glasses with his knuckles.

"Your mom doesn't make any sense." Eddie rolled his eyes and bumped Richie's shoulder with his own. They stopped at Eddie's locker so that he could put his algebra notes away, and they walked to the cafeteria in a casual lockstep. Richie brightened when they sat with the other losers, and Eddie watched him with concern that he couldn't garner the same reaction like he usually did. He assured him he wasn't mad at him, but there didn't seem to be any other reason.

At night, *what's new pussycat* replayed over and over in Eddie's head. He couldn't tell whose head it was stuck in, and it gave him more than a little amusement. No other song came up in his head, save for disconnected lines of the song from his soulmate when Eddie didn't have his walkman on him. It carried on for four straight days, until Friday. He had a resting devious smile on his face by then, and Stan couldn't even look at him without pressing his fist to his mouth to suppress a laugh.

"Go on without me," he told Ben before lunch, "I've gotta ask Mrs. Gardener something." He missed the homework pages, since Richie had been chattering on about some dumb show he saw last night right in his ear. The fact he had an almost perfect A in that class was an absolute natural phenomenon.

He promised to watch the show with him over the weekend but knew it wouldn't happen, since Richie would get distracted and forget he even asked. About thirteen weekend hangs ended that way, with Eddie sighing exasperatedly at his doorstep and Richie laughing off his embarrassment at forgetting.

The pages were 75 and 78, and he still had time to make it to lunch. He turned on *what's new pussycat* on his walkman while he walked to the cafeteria.

What's new pussycat? Woah, woah
What's new pussycat? Woah, woah, oh

The song was beyond played out, but at this point he couldn't help but hum along. It was embedded in his being, now, and he matched his step to the beat. He played with the zipper of his fanny pack with one hand and swung his lunch box with the other as he gained on the cafeteria double doors.

Pussycat, Pussycat, I've got flowers,
and-

" *Lots of hours ,*" the tune was off key, and didn't come from his headphones, but was sung at the same tempo and time as what played in his ears. It came from inside the cafeteria. Eddie pulled one of the headphones away from his ear to get a better listen. " *To spend with you .*" Eddie walked faster and pushed the doors open. Richie was on one of the tables, danced around lunch trays and stray hands, made exaggerated gestures with his hands and hips. It was a clear mockery, the sound of someone who heard a song they hated on the radio far too many times and now knew every word.

" *So go on and powder your cute little pussycat nose ,*" Richie squatted and touched Beverly's nose with his index finger. She pursed her lips together to contain a laugh, and huffed air out of her nose. He turned on his heel to Ben, took his cheeks in his hands and swayed his head back and forth in tune with the beat. Eddie watched the display with comically wide eyes.

" *Pussycat, Pussycat, I love you, ,*" he pinched Ben's cheeks, " *yes I do, you and your pussycat nose !*" Richie pulled him close, pressed a wet kiss to his forehead, and pushed Ben away. Ben wiped his forehead with the back of his hand, but laughed. He jumped to his feet again, the table shook dangerously and silverware clattered on lunch trays. Bill pulled his lunch box off the table and held it close to his chest. Eddie's windpipe was smaller than a pin, but he couldn't get his hand to move to get his inhaler.

" *What's new Pussycat ? Woah, woah !*" He waltzed with an imaginary partner, narrowly missed stepping an already dirty sneaker into Mike's mashed potatoes, and spun to face Eddie, although he didn't

know it. He extended his arm to serenade the cafeteria, “ *what’s new Pussycat ? Woa-* ” He locked eyes with Eddie, and his song twisted into a dry choke. His eyes bugged. The entire cafeteria went silent, turned curiously to what made the trashmouth lose his voice. Eddie lost grip on his lunch box, it clattered to the floor.

There were a lot of things Eddie planned to say to his soulmate when they met, a lot of things he planned to do. Although he insisted on it, abusive language or violence was never really on the table. At least until he found his soulmate, and he was making a joke out of the deep, interpersonal connection they shared, and his friends were laughing with him.

“You giant, fucking asshole,” he wheezed. He looked to his friends, who always acted so sympathetic, who laughed when he complained, who acted clueless when they mused about their soulmates late at night. His fingers curled into such tight fists they trembled. “You knew this *entire* time? You think this is funny?” He asked tensely. Richie held out his hands defensively.

“Eds-”

“You can fuck off!” He interrupted, livid. “Everything is such a fucking joke to you!” He pulled his headphones off his head and lobbed his walkman at Richie, who ducked and dodged it easily. “I’m sick of being your punchline! Eat shit, Tozier!” He kicked his lunch box, which skidded across the room, and stormed out of the cafeteria.

The door slammed behind him when he left, and Richie Tozier was left standing on the lunch table like a complete jackass. His shoulders slumped, and he stared at the door with a look one would find next to the dictionary definition of *heartbroken* .

“Oh, honey,” Bev said softly, voice clear as day through the silence. “You really fucked up this time.”

Richie knew who his soulmate was the day he met him. Okay, no, he didn’t know *then* , but that was when he fell in love with him. When Richie pushed him into the Kenduskeag and Eddie, much smaller and

much younger than now, had burst into tears. Richie panicked then, tried to pull him out of the water, but Eddie grabbed him by the hair and pulled him in with him instead of accepting his help.

Maybe it was odd that while Eddie held his head under the water to try and drown him he realized Eddie was who he wanted to be with for the rest of his life, but he never really cared about all that. All he cared about was that Eddie was fun, and even though he called him a jackass and kicked him around, he snorted at his jokes despite himself and never stood too far to hold. So in fifth grade when Eddie doodled in his math notes and hummed the tune of *enter sandman* even though he didn't know the song, which was on the mixtape Richie's dad made him, he couldn't contain himself.

"He's the one! He's the one he'stheonehe'stheone!" He shouted at Bill after school. He gripped his shoulders and shook him back and forth until Bill forcibly stopped him.

"W-Wuh-What are you t-tuh-talking ab-about?" He asked, and smacked Richie's hands away from him.

"Eds! Eddie! The short one!" He said.

"I n-n-know h-who Eddie ih-is," he said. Richie pushed his glasses up his nose and smiled widely at Bill.

"He's my *soulmate* ," he said proudly. Bill gave him a onceover, and regarded him carefully.

"You're sh-sh-sh-sure?"

"Super-duper sure," Richie confirmed.

"Are y-you gonna t-tuh-tell him?" He asked further, and Richie opened his mouth to respond, *yes, of course* , but hesitated. Would he tell him? Eddie's mother was remarkably bigoted, still believed in fucking *segregation* , once pulled Richie aside and had a very serious talk about how his lifestyle would land him in hell just because he parroted something he heard about queers when she was around. There was no way Eddie would be open to the thought that his soulmate was a guy, and no way Richie could put him in the position

to hide something so huge from his mother. He deflated. He took a deep inhale and looked to Bill with a big fake smile.

“Psht, naw! Why take all the fun out it, missuh?”

Bill told Stan, because he told Stan everything. Years later Richie told Beverly, who told Ben, and Mike found out all on his own. Somehow, the only one who didn’t know was Eddie, who stayed content in his ignorance. And they would feel guilty about it, when Eddie found out and his heart and trust broke at the same time, but it turned into a joke.

And almost five years after Eddie held his head under the surface of the Kenduskeag and cried at him, Richie felt like he was drowning all over again.

Richie didn’t follow him, didn’t dare. If he did Eddie would probably beat the shit out of him, and he wasn’t in the mood for more than one kick in the teeth. Instead he skipped the rest of his classes and smoked under the bleachers like a chimney.

He passed Eddie’s house on the way home, and as per expectation his bike was in the front yard. A wave of guilt clenched his stomach, and he pushed the petals of his own bike to speed out of sight of the house. But then he passed by again 20 minutes later, and again after dinner. He didn’t want to go in, or apologize, or deal with Eddie’s heartbreak and his anger, but biking there made him feel like he was at least *trying*.

On Saturday Richie biked to Eddie’s house, cruised into his driveway, and stood perched on the seat. He stared at Eddie’s bedroom window. Eddie’s bike was in the yard, so he was home, but Richie didn’t know what he wanted to say to him. He tapped out the beat of the first song that came to mind.

*Gonna take a lot to drag me away from you,
duhduduhduh hundred men or more could ever do,
I bless the rains duhdudh Africa,
gonna take some time to do the things w*

The tune was interrupted, forcefully, with an overwhelmingly loud chorus of *beat it* . Richie frowned deeply, and his chest constricted. He clenched his hands around his handlebars and backed his bike out of the Kaspbrak driveway. He lifted two packs of cigs from the pharmacy, went to the quarry, and smoked them all himself. He could hear Eddie's voice nagging him about gum disease and cancer, and a part of him wished he *would* get cancer and just fucking die.

That night, when it was too late to be night but too early to be morning, *careless whisper* lilted miserably from Eddie's end of their connection (although it seemed Eddie couldn't remember the rest of the lyrics, and that first verse of the chorus just replayed over and over again, *i'm never gonna dance again* ,) and Richie buried his head in his pillow and talked to Bev for over an hour on the phone. It didn't help much, because Bev couldn't understand if she tried.

"I can't just talk to him, Bevv-Bear," he told her. "He's probably still mad at me. Then I'll lose him forever, I says, *forever* ."

"You did make him look like an idiot in front of our whole grade," she agreed. Richie whined loudly.

"I fucked up so bad," he said. Beverly sighed, and there was a creak as she shifted in bed.

"So talk to him. If you talk to him there's a chance you can still fix it, but if you never talk to him about it you *will* lose him. Forever."

Richie groaned and looked at the sky outside his bedroom window. It was dark as all shit, but in a few hours the sun would start to come up. He thought about the tune that still played between his ears. Eddie was still awake, and he never was this late. He was seriously upset. He stomped his foot pathetically and turned away from his window.

"Fuck me, you're right."

"I always am," she said, though there was little pride in her voice. "Can I go to bed now?"

"Yeah, leave me alone," he told her. The line cut dead with no

preamble, and Richie tossed the phone on his bed. His parents were asleep, and he didn't want to alert them to him leaving, so he opened up his window and crawled out. He didn't even bother to change his clothes, just grabbed a t-shirt to throw on on the way. There was a small ledge under his window that he stretched his legs to get to, and he slid off to land indelicately in his front hedges. He mounted his bike, still left on its side in his yard, and sped off in the direction of Eddie's home.

He jumped off his bike before it even stopped, almost tripped over it when he let it clatter into the grass. Richie picked up clods of dirt (not wanting a repeat of last time, where he'd thrown rocks and shattered what he thought was Eddie's window but was actually his neighbor's) and threw them at Eddie's window. Eddie didn't come out until Richie persistently launched dirt at his window for almost an hour. He pulled up the window with no problem and brushed dirt off his window sill.

"What the fuck is your deal?" He hissed. Richie rubbed off his dirty hands on his boxer shorts.

"Can I come in?" Richie asked back. Eddie groaned and closed his window. Richie sighed softly and ran his hand through his knotted hair. He turned to leave when the front door of Eddie's house opened with a dangerous creak.

"You have to be quiet," Eddie warned as he waved him in. Richie pumped his fist in a small motion and followed him in through the foyer. He didn't need to be instructed which floorboards not to step on or which stairs creaked, he knew them like his own house. Eddie herded him into his bedroom and shut the door as slowly and quietly as possible. He turned to Richie and put his hands on his hips. His hair was bed headed, his Rambo night shirt came down to his mid thighs, completely hiding the running shorts he insisted were comfortable enough for bed (they weren't) that he no doubt wore. He looked tired, and like shit, and Richie never loved him more. "Well?" He asked impatiently.

"I'm..." he grimaced and fiddled with his hands. "I do say I am *deeply* sorry, my dear fellow," he said quickly. Eddie frowned.

"Really? The British Gentleman?" Richie shrugged his shoulders up to his ears.

"Sorry, this is so uncomfortable," he apologized. "I'll try and, y'know, be serious. Um." He wrung his hands together until they ached. "I'm really sorry for what I did, it wasn't okay. I totally humiliated you in front of our whole grade, and that sucks, and-" Eddie raised his hands to silently interrupt him, and Richie stopped.

"Hold on, is that seriously why you think I'm upset?" He asked incredulously. "Because you made an ass of me at lunch? Do you seriously think I'm that shallow?" Richie narrowed his eyes and leaned forward, like he was asked a trick question.

"Yes?"

"Jesus Christ," Eddie said. Richie pulled at a loose thread on his shirt, an alleviation from his guilt. "I don't give a shit about everybody else, Rich. We're literally a part of a *losers club*, you could pants me in front of the whole state and my reputation wouldn't change. It doesn't fucking matter." Eddie put his hands on Richie's shoulders and forced him to sit down on Eddie's unmade bed. It felt a lot more scolded-by-a-teacher than sexy, which sucked. "You knew you were my soulmate for *years*, and you never told me. You told all the the losers before me, and half of them you barely even know still. That's so unfair."

"I didn't know what you'd say, and your *mom*," Richie put his hands over Eddie's, and squeezed them slightly. "I didn't want to make you hide that from her."

"Well I have to hide it now, anyways," he countered, "and the only difference is you fucked around for half our lives."

"I've fucked around my entire life, don't be an idiot," Richie said, and Eddie fought off a smile. He shoved Richie's shoulders.

"Don't ruin it. I would've been okay with it."

Richie frowned, and stared at his feet. He wiggled his toes and bounced his right leg to keep from being still. He looked back up at

Eddie's face and pressed his lips together.

"I really am sorry," he said quietly. Eddie smiled and moved his hands to Richie's hair, which he gripped gently to move his head to and fro. Richie grinned and let him.

"It's okay," he said. "We're okay," he added, just so Richie knew.

"Whadda we do now?" Richie asked. Eddie hummed and squeezed Richie's head between his hands until he laughed.

"I guess, I don't know," he said. "We could take some time to think about it. Or we could get together, romantically, if you want-romantic, stuff- things-," he stuttered out. Richie put his hands on Eddie's forearms and pulled him down to Richie's height.

"Can I kiss you?"

"Or we can do that, that's, yes, that sounds great actually-"

Richie pressed a chaste kiss to the corner of Eddie's lips, and Eddie fell blissfully silent. They smiled into each kiss they shared, until

" *What's new Pussycat ? Woah, woah ,*" Richie sang cheerily against Eddie's lips between a kiss, and Eddie shoved him away. He landed on his back on Eddie's bed, hysterical laughter bubbling out of his chest. God, he hated that song, probably more than Eddie ever would.

"Okay, alright, get out. Leave. Fuck off." Eddie hit him with his pillow, and Richie held up a hand to weakly block it. "I'm serious, I have to get ready for church."

"Just skip it, Jesus will forgive you, that's his whole thing," Richie said, grabbed the assaulting pillow and tugged it out of Eddie's hands.

"I'm more afraid of my mother."

" *Our* mother, now."

"Oh, sweet fuck."

Author's Note:

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